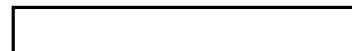


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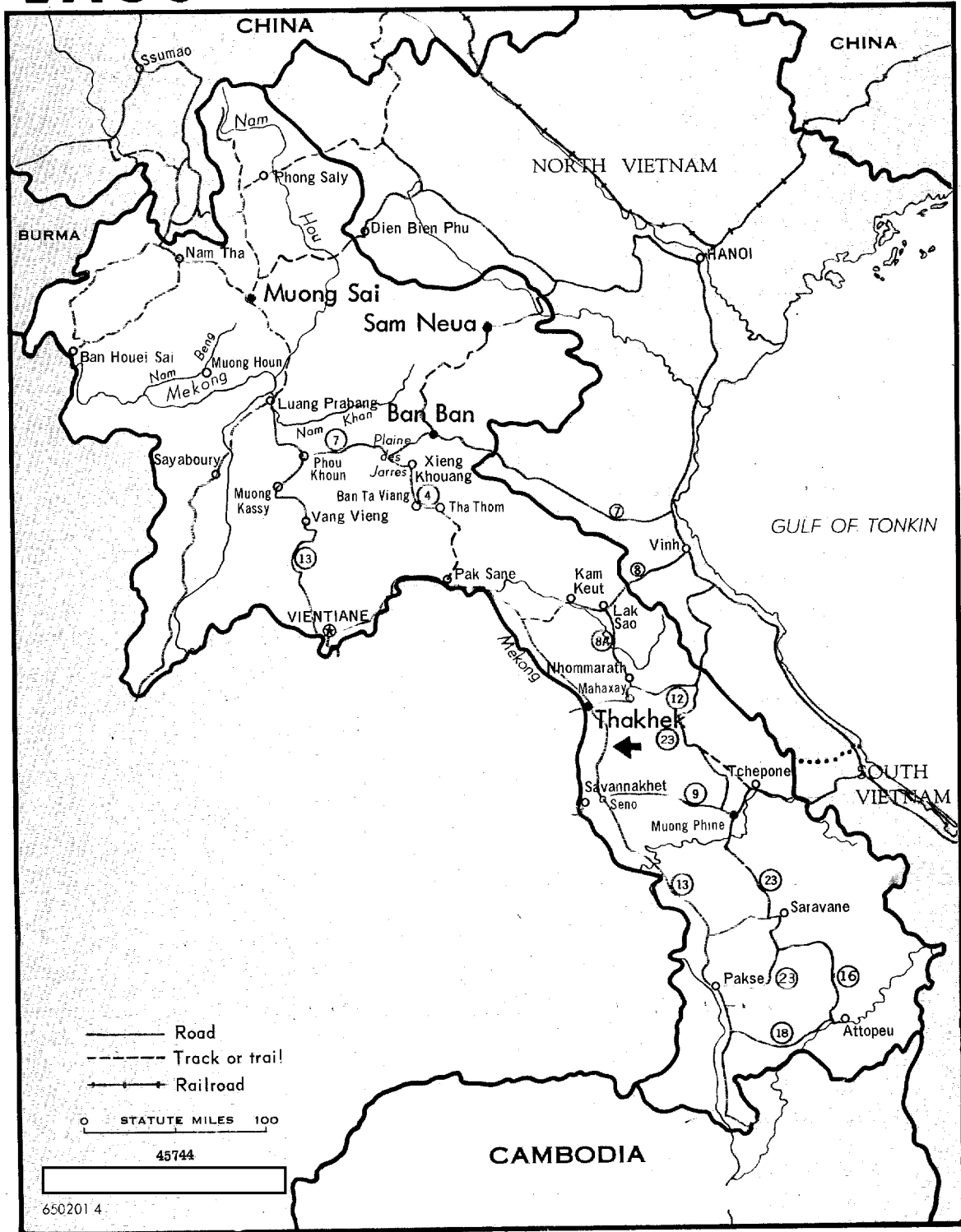


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LAOS



Laos: The Communists are increasing pressure at widely separated locations in northern and central Laos.

In the Thakhek area of central Laos, the Communists have resumed operations similar to the forays they conducted early last December. On 30-31 January, enemy forces--reportedly in battalion strength--launched attacks against government regular and guerrilla forces near Route 13 about 20-25 miles southeast of Thakhek.

In the north, recent reports suggest that the Communists may be preparing another clearing operation against regular and guerrilla forces operating in territory the Pathet Lao claim to be within their "liberated area." Several guerrilla units in the hills surrounding Muong Sai, north of Luang Prabang, were forced from their positions in mid-January as a result of sharply stepped-up enemy pressure. Communist pressure on government pockets southwest of Sam Neua continues.

Communist reinforcements have also been moved into the hills northwest of Ban Ban, presumably for the purpose of increasing the security of the important Route 7 road artery leading from North Vietnam to the Plaine des Jarres. Last week an estimated 200 North Vietnamese troops dispersed a Meo guerrilla unit in this area.

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Sudan: [Senior Sudanese Army officers are said to be supporting efforts to reduce Communist influence in the government]



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[The Ansar, [redacted] are making a last effort to oust the Communists by steps short of a coup. They have presented the cabinet with a series of demands that Communist cabinet representation be reduced and that elections be held on schedule this spring. The non-Communist parties believe they would win a large parliamentary majority if the elections take place at that time]

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[The present capabilities and loyalties of the Sudanese Army units near Khartoum are unclear, but recent efforts by the Communists to increase their own strength in the army have met strong resistance. The threat of army intervention on the side of the Ansar might force the cabinet to proceed with election plans. Continued delay would almost certainly provoke new disorders in Khartoum sparked by the Ansar even if the army does not act]

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EEC: [The Common Market appears to be moving toward another extension of preferential trading arrangements which will further erode the most-favored-nation principle.]

[The EEC Council is expected to authorize today negotiation of an association agreement under which Nigerian exports could enter the Common Market under virtually the same favorable terms as those of the 18 African states already associated with the EEC. The EEC would in turn receive preferences in the Nigerian market.]

[Discussions with Nigeria opened last July, but until now have made little progress. They have been slowed down principally by French resistance--perhaps only tactical--to an agreement which could harm the present African associates, most of which are former French colonies. At an EEC meeting last week, however, the French appeared suddenly to have shifted their position.]

[In taking a more favorable attitude towards Nigeria, Paris may be bargaining primarily for a favorable EEC attitude toward the association of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, which is also now under consideration. The French have probably never been averse to seeing a slice of the Commonwealth brought into the EEC's trading system, however, and one US Mission source has speculated that the shift might even presage a conscious attempt to use the EEC bargaining position to obtain preferential trading positions throughout the less developed world.]

[In any case, if the Nigerian negotiations now proceed along these lines, they are likely to give a boost to the EEC talks with several East African states which are due to begin late this month.] [redacted]

[redacted]

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